

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. VICKY HARTZLER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 25, 2021

Mrs. HARTZLER. Madam, Speaker, I was unable to vote. Had I been present, I would have voted: YEA on Roll Call No. 18.

PROVIDING FOR EXCEPTION TO
LIMITATION AGAINST APPOINT-
MENT OF PERSONS AS SEC-
RETARY OF DEFENSE WITHIN
SEVEN YEARS OF RELIEF FROM
ACTIVE DUTY

SPEECH OF

HON. BILL POSEY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 21, 2021

Mr. POSEY. Mr. Speaker, through the National Security Act, Congress required that the Secretary of Defense be from civilian life and placed a limitation on the appointment of former military personnel to that position mandating that a nominee be retired from military service for ten years. In 2008, Congress shortened that period to seven years.

I have several concerns which I would like to express and go on record in opposition to providing a waiver. First, I thank the General for his service to our nation in uniform. I have reservations about providing yet another waiver from the law intended to preserve civilian leadership in the role of Secretary of Defense. If confirmed as Secretary of Defense by the U.S. Senate, after fewer than five years from his last military assignment, General Lloyd Austin (Ret.) will be expected to uphold the principles of civilian control of the military.

My hope is that General Austin's focus will be ensuring that our nation is prepared to meet head-on the threat posed by adversaries including China, Russia, and Iran. He should follow and focus on the bipartisan 2018 National Defense Strategy that stresses the need to strengthen our military for potential major conflict. Mr. Austin should work to preserve the strategic nuclear triad, protect and ensure American space superiority, and maintain Naval supremacy as cornerstones of our freedom.

Serving as our nation's Secretary of Defense is an awesome responsibility and I await the U.S. Senate vetting General Austin as the U.S. Senate has the responsibility under the Constitution of reviewing Presidential nominees.

IN RECOGNITION OF HER SERVICE:
MS. JUDITH MITCHELL

HON. ALAN S. LOWENTHAL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 25, 2021

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Judith Mitchell and her career of public service.

After 11 years of dedicated public service, Ms. Mitchell will be retiring from public service.

Ms. Mitchell served with honor as Rolling Hills Estate Mayor and Council Member for her city, Southland, her state and the nation. Ms. Mitchell showed her fairness, depth of knowledge and dedication to improving the quality of life for all.

During her political career, Ms. Mitchell was elected to represent 51 cities in the western portion of Los Angeles County which she represented through the Governing Board of the South Coast Air Quality Management District. Ms. Mitchell was then appointed to the California Air Resources Board under Governor Edmund J. Brown, and additionally served as the President of the League of California Cities where she chaired several key environmental committees. Her work on these two agencies, helped to spur technological innovation to create jobs and economic growth in the Southland and across the nation.

Ms. Mitchell's legacy for clean air policies and her unwavering support for green technologies has not only helped those most impacted in her community, but these efforts have a direct impact on my Congressional District. These clean air advancements will also assist other States and regions to help meet federal public health standards and build a foundation for the United States technological and industrial leadership.

It is with great pride and gratitude that I extend my best wishes to Ms. Judith Mitchell upon her retirement and ask that my distinguished colleagues join me in honoring her.

CONDEMNING IRRESPONSIBLE
DEFAMATION IN CONGRESS

HON. PAUL A. GOSAR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 25, 2021

Mr. GOSAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my dismay that members of Congress are making unfounded claims of treason and sedition against their colleagues without evidence to back their outlandish claims. By this, I mean the numerous members alleging that members aided in "reconnaissance" tours for those individuals who would storm the Capitol during the Electoral College certification.

These accusations leveled by several members make these bold statements without offering a shred of evidence. In fact, over 30 members put their names on a letter which made these allegations without even an indication to whom they were referring to. In the absence of fact, these accusations have allowed conspiracy to permeate the narrative from the deepest enclaves of the Internet. Leftist media sources, from major 24 hour broadcast companies to blogs, have picked up on these hollow accusations, and the effects have been damaging.

Since evidence and due process have been replaced with speculation, members of Congress are being deemed guilty of these crimes, including myself. In fact, there is now a narrative running that since I supported the objection to the certification of the count, I must be one of the members guilty of this treason. Multiple media sources have reported as "fact" that me and other objectors conducted tours of the Capitol to do some type of "reconnaissance". This is patently and un-

equivocally false. They offered no proof of this scurrilous and defamatory falsehood. I asked Capitol Police to pull and preserve all video footage from House security cameras which can establish with finality who, if anyone, gave even one tour during the days leading to the unrest. I can say this: my office has not given a tour since February 2020. The continuing publication of this defamation by members of Congress and media is unprofessional, unethical, and actionable.

The increase in violent, threatening messages received in our offices because of the irresponsible political messaging from my colleagues in coordination with their media pals is sickening and indicative of our larger societal issues, such as a media which tells their viewers what they know to be true, not what the facts are. So, let me set the record straight. I have not given a tour of the Capitol since 2017, and my staff has not given a tour since they closed to the public early in 2020 as a COVID-19 response. Further, at no time did anyone with Stop the Steal talk to me about violence, and my efforts to speak to the American people and fight for my constituents were guided by the First Amendment and the Electoral Count Act of 1878.

Madam Speaker, the purpose of this body is to serve as the voice of the American people, a voice which speaks with honesty to conduct the business of this country and contribute to the overall good. Yet, the passions of humanity can undermine these principles, and these unfounded accusations are a menace to the traditions of this body. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I condemn my colleagues irresponsible actions and their use of their official powers to fuel a media spectacle for their own political benefit. Their willingness to set these mistruths into the public and not interject when the truth is deviated from and innocent people are blamed is defamation, conspiratorial, and faulty justice. Much like McCarthyism or the witch hunt conducted these last four years, history will not look kindly on this abuse of Congressional power, and therefore I implore my colleagues to either set the record straight with evidence or retract these claims immediately to resecure their position in history.

REINTRODUCTION OF THE COM-
PREHENSIVE BREAST RECON-
STRUCTION ACT

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 25, 2021

Mr. HASTINGS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to reintroduce the Comprehensive Breast Reconstruction Act. This legislation will bring Medicaid and Medicare programs into compliance with the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998, and will expand post-mastectomy breast reconstruction patients' access to modern and innovative procedures, products, and therapies to support their return to a healthy normal.

In 2020 alone, almost 280,000 new instances of breast cancer were estimated to have been diagnosed, and anticipated deaths from breast cancer were over 42,000. However, the breast cancer survival rate has steadily increased faster than the rate of new diagnoses, which is believed to be related to

new treatments and procedures, such as early detection screening.

My legislation builds on past advancements and successes to heal the whole patient following a medically-necessary mastectomy. Deciding to receive a mastectomy is undoubtedly an emotional decision in an impossible situation. In order to alleviate the toll this decision has on breast cancer patients, breast reconstruction is an option for them to build a sense of well-being and confidence as well as regain a sense of wholeness.

More patients are opting for breast reconstruction, with over 107,000 in 2019, a 36 percent growth since 2000. Unfortunately, many patients face a complex landscape of what exactly a breast reconstruction entails, and laws and policies intended to provide healthcare coverage for this procedure are antiquated and do not account for advances in this area.

My legislation will establish a more uniform and comprehensive breast reconstruction process that can be tailored to fit each patient's needs. Medicaid and Medicare beneficiaries will be guaranteed access to post-mastectomy reconstruction under the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act and by expanding coverage to include nipple-areola complex tattoos for those who elect to undergo this procedure. The goal is to expand access to scientifically proven healthcare that increase patient well-being and satisfaction with their results.

Madam Speaker, breast reconstruction and the nipple-areola complex tattoo are not about cosmetic change. They are about holistic outcomes and choice in what the patient and provider decide is best physically, emotionally, and mentally to attain the ideal outcome and long-term health.

I urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring this long-overdue legislation.

AMERICAN FOOD FOR AMERICAN SCHOOLS ACT OF 2021

HON. JOHN GARAMENDI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 25, 2021

Mr. GARAMENDI. Madam Speaker, today I reintroduce the "American Food for American Schools Act," which I have sponsored since the 114th Congress. I want to thank Representatives KAPTUR (D-OH), FORTENBERRY (R-NE), RYAN (D-OH), LAMALFA (R-CA), CARBAJAL (D-CA), YOUNG (R-AK), and KILMER (D-WA) for their support as original cosponsors.

Our "American Food for American Schools Act" would strengthen enforcement of the existing "Buy American" requirements under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) school breakfast, special milk, and national school lunch programs. This will ensure that school districts use federal taxpayer dollars to purchase domestically sourced food products for all in-school meals and afterschool snacks. Our bipartisan bill would also increase public transparency by allowing parents to know from where the food served to their children in school comes.

Even in California's Central Valley, which includes many of the most productive agricultural communities in the nation, school districts continue to misuse taxpayer dollars to buy im-

ported foods, unnecessarily, without informing parents. In numerous cases, these same imported foods have been recalled due to safety concerns and outbreaks of food borne diseases. This is especially troubling as those same foods could have been sourced locally in the first place as required by federal law.

Under our bill, school districts would be required to obtain a written waiver from USDA to use federal taxpayer dollars to purchase foreign-sourced food products. Any such waivers would only be granted by USDA if the domestically produced food was cost prohibitive or simply unavailable. Our bill would also require that school districts notify parents of all foreign-sourced foods served to students, by posting any such waivers obtained from USDA on the school's website. This would increase public transparency and provide American farmers the opportunity to seek out school districts in need of affordable, domestically grown foods. Our nation's schoolchildren should be served nutritious, American-grown foods produced under the strictest food safety standards in the world, as required by federal law. That is exactly what our bill would accomplish.

In the 115th Congress, we included a "Buy American" enforcement provision for the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Program in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-334), commonly known as the 2018 Farm Bill. This was a first step in addressing this critical issue for American farmers and parents with school-age children. Now, Congress needs to finish the job by passing our "American Food for American Schools Act" into law.

Madam Speaker, I hope all members of the House will join us in cosponsoring the "American Food for American Schools Act of 2021." I look forward to working with the Committee on Education and Labor to ensure that our bipartisan bill is included in any future Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation.

IN HONOR OF THE LIFE OF SGT. MAJ. JERRY BELL

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 25, 2021

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life of Sergeant Major Jerry Bell, a decorated veteran of the United States Army, who sadly passed away Sunday, January 10, 2021.

Jerry Lynn Bell was born May 2, 1943 to parents William Ernest and Mary Adeline (Johnson) Bell in Leon County, Texas. Jerry Bell's entire life has been defined by bravery and selfless service. At the age of 17, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. During his time in the military, he rose to the rank of Sergeant Major and proved himself to be a true American hero, receiving the Purple Heart, the Distinguished Flying Cross, three Air Medals for valor, two Bronze Stars for valor, and an Army Commendation Medal for valor during his service in the Vietnam War as a tanker and helicopter gunner. His nephew, Texas State Representative Cecil Bell Jr., describes Sgt. Maj. Bell as a "true warrior who fought with valor and distinction."

While his military service took him from Alaska to Germany, Sgt. Maj. Bell could not

help but return to his home of Leon County. After returning to Texas, he worked for B-5 Construction, the U.S. Postal Service, and was the owner and operator of Bell Alley Gun Shop.

Sgt. Maj. Bell was a mainstay of the community. At his gun shop, he did what he loved most, selling guns and working as a gunsmith while sharing thoughts on conservatism, 2nd amendment rights, and religion. While Sgt. Maj. Bell leaves behind a military legacy to be heralded, it comes second to his legacy as a man who placed God first in his life, a man who loved his country and state, and a man who was a devoted husband, father, and great-grandfather. Sgt. Maj. Bell's favorite times were those spent with family at Bell family reunions and Christmas parties at his home in Leona. The Bell family shared their lives with each other and the entire community, making everyone feel like they were a part of this tight-knit family.

In the words of his nephew, Cecil Bell Jr., "On January 10, 2021, as the cold rains fell in Leon County, Texas, the chopping sounds of an Army helicopter landing were heard as Jerry Bell, age 77, Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Retired, deployed to Heaven's shore." Sgt. Maj. is remembered by his loving wife, Alice Cothron Bell of Leona and a host of loving children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

I join the entire community in honoring Sgt. Maj. Bell for a lifetime of service both overseas and stateside. His service to our nation will never be forgotten.

IMPEACHMENT OF PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP

HON. CAROLYN BOURDEAUX

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 25, 2021

Ms. BOURDEAUX. Madam Speaker, I teach a class called Public Service and Democracy where often I point out that our democracy is not self-executing, it requires people of good faith and ethics to make it work.

Our President and those who enable him are not operating in good faith. I come from Georgia, one of the most contested states during this election cycle and I'm no stranger to fighting for voting rights or concerns about election results.

I've fought for years to protect our elections in Georgia and expand access to the ballot box—so I know a thing or two about free and fair elections.

Let's be clear: Georgia's elections were administered by Republicans who themselves voted for and campaigned for President Trump. So if there was fraud, I'm sure they would have found it. At the request of the President and his surrogates, Republicans have looked high and low for voter fraud and have found nothing.

Georgia officials, at significant cost to the taxpayers I might add, have counted the five million votes in Georgia three times, once by hand, and only found minor errors that would not change the outcome of the election.

They have audited 15,000 voter signatures and again only found the most trivial of problems, and nothing that would indicate voter fraud.